

Marina Ahmad AM

Chair of the London Assembly Economy Committee
C/o jack.booth@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA200423-5393

Date: 31 October 2023

Dear Marina,

I am writing to you following my response to the London Assembly's Economy Committee regarding its report on Food Insecurity in London. In my response, I said I would write to the committee at the start of the 2023-24 academic year to provide further updates on my universal free school meals programme.

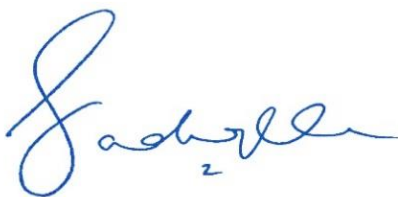
The universal free school meals programme will enable families in London to save upwards of £440 per child across the year, allowing up to 287,000 children in Years 3-6 in state primary schools to receive a nutritious meal each school day.

All 33 London boroughs have entered into agreements to receive funding for this programme, a testament to the months of joint working between the GLA and the boroughs. I have attached a briefing that was sent to all Assembly Members in September, which provides a more detailed update on the roll out of the programme. **(Annex 1)**

Deputy Mayor for Children and Families, Joanne McCartney, and GLA Programme Director of the Universal Free School Meals team will be attending the next Economy Committee meeting in November to give a verbal update on the progress made in the first term.

As stated in my response to the food insecurity report, I will continue to provide updates on my universal free school meals programme throughout the academic year.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

Dear Assembly Member,

We wanted to write to you to provide a brief update on the Mayor's emergency expansion of free school meals which will be rolled out across London this week.

Overview: The Mayor of London's historic **£135 million** emergency funding to provide state primary school children in London with free school meals during the **2023-24 academic year**, comes into effect this month. This unprecedented intervention is being delivered as an emergency cost of living support measure and will enable up to **287,000 more primary school children in Years 3 – 6** to receive a nutritious meal each school day.

Impact: Recent polling from YouGov shows that close to half (48 per cent) of parents or guardians with children between 5 and 11 years are buying less food and essentials. The expansion of universal free school meals will help these families facing the spiralling cost of living, potentially saving them upwards of £440 per child across the year. Research has also shown that making free school meals universal can help reduce stigma and boost uptake amongst families who need them most, alongside increasing educational attainment and concentration levels at school. **The Mayor continues to call on the Government to step forward and provide the necessary funding to make this intervention permanent.**

Borough & school engagement: We have worked closely with boroughs and schools through a range of forums, involving boroughs, schools and industry. Additionally, we have created and shared practical resources via our online hub. We have also convened a range of webinars for borough and school staff to share best practice, including specific sessions on pupil premium registration, programme delivery and catering procurement.

Funding allocations: The **price per meal is funded at £2.65** which is above the Government's recently increased rate of £2.53 for Universal Infant Free School Meals. Borough funding allocations are based on the number of Key Stage 2 pupils on school census day in **January 2022**, minus any recipients of the Government's Free School Meals. The Mayor has also made available contingency funding to support with any extraordinary costs associated with implementation of UFSM. Such costs may be due to specific access requirements (e.g. children with SEND) and/or pupils who have specific dietary requirements in connection with their faith (e.g. kosher meals).

Grants: London Boroughs have received their grant allocations as well as conditions and principles that accompany the grants. All 33 boroughs have entered into agreements to receive the funding for the provision of meals.

Eligibility: The Mayor has funding to all London boroughs, including those that were already providing Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) to their primary school pupils. These boroughs are all intending to offset funds to offer further support to families in the cost of living crisis.

Coverage: The Mayor's programme is consistent with the Government's existing funding of meals, as it will cover **state-funded primary schools, special schools**

and pupil referral units, including faith schools, but not private or independent schools.

Evaluation: There is a multi-strand approach to monitoring and evaluation, including GLA-led monitoring throughout the year to support implementation, and full evaluation of impact to be carried out independently by partners at the end of the programme. We will also track any changes to pupil premium rates and government FSM claims throughout the policy cycle, to ensure that we are responsive and continuing to support boroughs/schools to avoid a dip in pupil premium rates.

Nutrition: Boroughs will be encouraged to meet the Government's School Food Standards as part of the grant principles. Schools that are not already participating in the Mayor's Healthy Schools London and Water Only Schools programmes are encouraged to register for these programmes through their borough.

The Mayor continues to call on Government to step forward and provide the necessary funding to make this intervention permanent.

If you would like more information on this policy, please contact the Free School Meals team on freeschoolmeals@london.gov.uk.